

## Reagan's Different Brand of Statism

"Ours is the only country deliberately founded on a good idea," John Gunther once wrote, and no one knew that better than that late avid chronicler of the nation's byways and folkways. At root, it's the idea of liberty that has been fueling the joyful spectacle in New York this week in honor of the Statue of Liberty. And it's the idea, after all, that underlies all the fireworks and glitter of this and every Fourth of July.

But there are, as always, other ideas at work here. Just as there are tawdry aspects to the extravaganza in New York,

### Viewpoint

By Hodding Carter III

there are forces in America that run directly counter to the precepts given prominence during this happy flag-waver of a week. They are forces the founders of the republic would have recognized, for they were known and rejected in their own time. That they are on the march again today should be a matter of wry, if brief, amusement, since they are at base the nostrums of unashamed statism, of totalitarianism wrapped in the banners of national security and morality. They are funny because so many of those who advocate them admit to neither hypocrisy nor inconsistency, even as they chant their battle cry of "Less Government."

Today, the Goliath of the State is starved at one meal, only to be fed double rations at the other two and snacks in between. At its simplest, this plain truth is illustrated by the fact that government is larger than it was when the Reagan administration took office. It costs tens of billions more, and it touches millions more lives. But that, we are instructed, doesn't count, because the emphasis of today's government spending is national defense rather than domestic welfare, and it is well

known that the latter is infinitely more subversive of liberty than the former.

Perhaps, but the reallocation of resources to military spending has been accompanied by a reallocation of concerns at the highest levels of the federal government. If the old complaint was that government was too intrusive in the marketplace, the new reality is that government is too contemptuous of basic constitutional rights. James Madison might have been speaking of today when he wrote, "I believe there are more instances of the abridgement of the freedom of the people by gradual and silent encroachment of those in power than by violent and sudden usurpations."

Except that the encroachments have generally not been silent, and they have been gradual only because of sporadic resistance by Congress, courts, the media and the public. They have been unremittingly real, however. By executive order, administrative decision and public statement, the Reaganites have mounted a coordinated drive whose effect, professed aims notwithstanding, has been to speed the day when government of the people is replaced by government of Big Brother.

Put aside some of the better-known excesses. Ignore the assaults on the Freedom of Information Act, the executive order that enlarged the scope of classification in a country with millions of pieces of material already under government's lock and key. Overlook the use of the FBI to seize and examine the papers of journalists and private files, the exclusion of certain foreigners from the U.S. because of their views, and the expanding use of lie detectors in federal agencies.

Concentrate instead on the exemption of ever larger chunks of the federal budget from full congressional and public scrutiny. Note in particular that the "black money" (i.e., secret) category of defense spending has gone in six years from \$4.6 billion to a proposed \$22.5 billion. That's a jump to 7% from 3% of the military budget. Add that to the publicly unac-

knowledgeed billions hidden in the overall budget for intelligence functions, and you have a government disturbingly free of normal checks and balances—and government closer to Soviet norms than American. "Trust us" becomes the byword, and this in a nation that prides itself on a government of laws rather than of men.

It is possible for the public to ignore CIA Director William J. Casey's exercises in press intimidation and public calls for prosecution of news organizations for supposed breaches of national-security laws. Let the press look after itself. But what of the rapid government centralization of personal data banks in marked disregard of Privacy Act restrictions?

And what, too, of the slimily effective methods of the staff of the attorney general's pornography commission? Its executive director wrote to a number of companies noting that the commission had heard testimony (from one person, actually) that they engaged in the sale and promotion of pornography. He suggested they had an "opportunity" to take steps before their names were listed in the commission's final report as purveyors of filth. Some thought they understood the message and removed Playboy and Penthouse, among other magazines, from their shelves. No loss to literature, perhaps, but a great loss to freedom, with the government playing the role of inappropriate censor.

Speaking of the possibility of such trends 30 years ago, the late Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas said: "These short cuts are not as flagrant, perhaps, as a lynching. But the ends they produce are cumulative, and if they continue unabated can silently rewrite even the fundamental law of the nation."

Those are good words to remember this week between the fireworks and the Elvis look-alikes.